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AN IMPORTANT GIFT FROM MR.  
GEORGE A. HEARN

ONE of the best known of the few easel pictures which Edwin A. Abbey painted is the *King Lear*, dated 1898, which formed part of the notable group of modern paintings belonging to the late George McCulloch of London. The McCulloch Collection was sold last May and Mr. Hearn secured this painting from its buyer at the sale and now gives it to the Museum. The picture is a large one, 53 inches in height by 126 in width. It was shown at the Royal Academy in 1898, also at the Guildhall in 1900, at the International Exhibition, Rome, 1911, and at Burlington House in 1912. At all these exhibitions the *King Lear* was a center of attraction, as it exemplifies very distinctly all the qualities which have won for Abbey his high place in the estimation of the public not only in this country but in England as well, where no artist was better known.

Edwin A. Abbey combined the gifts of a popular illustrator with a rare painter's skill. He could tell a story dramatically and clearly within a composition which seems designed primarily with the idea of balance and decorative effect. He had marked ability in posing figures so that their expression could be readily grasped and in clothing them in picturesque garments, real costumes that people could wear, in which no detail or trifle is slighted. He has used all of these talents to good effect in our picture. The *King Lear* is comparable in every way to his best-known mural work, the famous *Holy Grail* series in the Boston Library.

The incident of the play which is the motive of the picture occurs in the first scene of the first act where the old *King* leaves the stage after disinheriting *Cordelia*. She is in the center of the scene — the *King* of France standing beside her bends down to kiss her hand. She turns toward *Goneril* and *Regan* at the left, who bid her a contemptuous farewell. At the right *Lear* is leaving, supporting himself with his hands on the shoulders of his attendants as he infirmly prepares to descend the steps,

his dog coming after. The throne he has left is back of the elder sisters. The quotation is as follows:

France.	Bid farewell to your sisters.
Cordelia.	Ye jewels of our father with washed eyes, Cordelia leaves you: I know you what you are; And like a sister, am most loth to call Your faults as they are nam'd. Love well our father: To your professed bosoms I commit him; But yet alas! stood I within his grace, I would prefer him to a better place. So, farewell to you both.

The legend of *King Lear* took its recognizable form in early mediaeval times, and Abbey, whose methods demanded that he place the story in a certain historical epoch, just as the stage manager of to-day is forced to do in presenting the tragedy, has chosen the twelfth century (about the time of the first appearance of the story in connection with English history) as the model which he has adapted for his costumes and settings. The ladies wear voluminous gowns, with their hair in long bands tied together with ribbons, falling over their shoulders, as one may see in the statue of *Queen Clotilde* from the portal of *Nôtre-Dame of Corbeil*, now in the Abbey Church of *Saint Denis*, or in that of the same queen still at the west door of *Chartres Cathedral*. The soldiers have armor of metal plaques like fishes' scales, which the sculpture of that time gives authority for. It is a logical choice on the painter's part, for the conceptions of these legends have always been associated with mediaeval customs.

*King Lear* is shown in Gallery 13. On either side of it are two pictures by J. J. Shannon, *Magnolia* and *Fairy Tales*, (also from the McCulloch Collection) which have been bought out of the Hearn Fund and the Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund respectively. Mr. Shannon, though often classed with the English painters, having lived in London for a long time, was born in New York. Mr. Hearn has tried for the last five years to secure prominent pictures by Abbey and Shannon.

B. B.



KING LEAR  
BY  
EDWIN A. ABBEY